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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DIMENSION

Volume I

MAY, 1964

Number

DIMENSION is a student theological journal published each semester by Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Its conceived purpose is to give creative expression to contemporary theological issues of especial concern in the seminary community both at Princeton and at large. Giving voice to current issues is not the sole aim of this journal, for, in addition, it strives to stimulate mature discussion of vital problems and new ideas.

As a student journal, DIMENSION is based on the conviction that in order for theological education to achieve the utmost in excellence it should, and, indeed, it must provide and encourage the opportunity for original thought.

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Walls of Separation

Commissioned with its barrier-breaking, community-building task of reconciliation, the church faces its greatest obstacle not outside itself, but *within*: its own *Walls of Separation*. Such is the message of this second issue of **Dimension**.

In keeping with this year's theme of "A Crisis in the Church," our contributors draw our attention to 'crises' which point to "walls of separation" within the church's own flesh-and-blood, brick-and-mortar structure. In spite of its high calling, we are reminded that the 'ecclesia,' in *any* form, is subject to the same imperfections, the same self-misunderstandings as all other institutions of human construction and composition. Our contributors would lead us not only to a critical self-examination, however; in each case, the final analysis is marked by a constructive alternative, a reinterpretation, a positive suggestion for future action.

The church's inability to reinterpret its message to the mind of the modern generation, is broached by **Graeme M. Griffin** in our lead article, "The Two Faces of Hell." Focusing upon the "current wholesale abandonment of the myth of hell," Mr. Griffin presents the reader with a provocative reinterpretation in the light of contemporary psychology. The "walls of separation" are inwardly conceived by our first contributor. They exist within modern man's "contemporary hell" of "cold self-hatred." "Hate feeds on fear which feeds on emptiness. And emptiness in its turn feeds on hate," according to Mr. Griffin. "The cycle can be broken, but let the Church beware of assuming that merely talking about the love of God automatically guarantees its presence and its revitalizing power in a specific human situation." Graeme M. Griffin is a doctoral student, serving as a teaching fellow for the Practical Department at Princeton Seminary. He comes to Princeton from Albury, Australia.

Clayton Carlson, our second contributor, probes the present problem of civil rights with a penetrating analysis of that traditional "wall," racial discrimination. His article, entitled "Masked Idolatry," is to be read in light of the fact that it was originally prepared for a lay, adult study group in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Mr. Carlson, a Senior from Minneapolis, Minnesota, has been engaged in an internship program at the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Wayne during the past year. Faced with the challenge that the Christian church brings no true, unadulterated voice of its own to one of the chief social crises of our day, Mr. Carlson has attempted to articulate a truly "theological interpretation," free from popular conceptions and mis-

conceptions, of that barrier which separates man from man. His thesis is that "The problem of racial discrimination is essentially man's age-old problem of idolatry." It grows out of man's attempt to idolize, whether consciously or unconsciously, the finite values of his own culture. He writes, "If a man is able to judge the acceptability or unacceptability of other men according to their similarity to or divergence from the characteristics and values of his racial group, then his racial group is his god. It is the characteristics and value of his racial group that has become the center of his love and devotion and this is idolatry—pure and simple."

Of the various "walls" which stand within the church perhaps none is more formidable than that which is erected out of a concern for religious immunity from outside criticism. According to **Donald H. Liebert**, a doctoral student from Rochester, New York, the kind of 'blind piety' which attempts to absolutize the church and hide from the piercing gaze of the 'secularist' on the outside, has become particularly acute in our day. In his article, "Some Men Try to Hide!", Mr. Liebert faces this problem squarely. According to his thesis, the church can no longer afford to hide from the fact, illuminated once-and-for-all by the behavioral scientists, that it is still a "relative, secular institution, in a relative, secular society" in spite of its theological pretensions. The criticisms which have

been leveled against the church by the social sciences must not be taken as a threat. They are to be taken as valuable insights into the church's true nature—as indispensable tools for the advancement of its work in the kind of a world in which it must not, indeed, it cannot, separate itself. Mr. Liebert's article has particular relevance to our theme, especially with regard to our discussion in the previous issue.

In keeping with the journal's desire to encourage a wide range of artistic expression within the theological or religious context, we present in this issue a suggestive photographic study by **Nancy Howard** and **Richard Husfloen**. Miss Howard, a Senior MRE student, and Mr. Husfloen, who is completing his Masters degree this June, have teamed together in sketching a 'slice-of-life' portrait of the 'ecclesia' and its contemporary 'malade.' The portrait, from Mr. Husfloen's camera, is knitted together by Miss Howard's verse, titled after her subject.

Two poems, one by Miss Howard, the other by **Frank H. Poole**, a welcomed, previous contributor, round off this second issue of **Dimension**. May a word of thanks be said in conclusion to **Mr. Leslie Broomfield**, our Consulting Editor from the Princeton Printing Company. His professional assistance and, particularly, his personal interest in the subject at hand has been greatly appreciated.

John C. Staten

THE TWO FACES OF HELL

If some latter-day Jonathan Edwards were to preach on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" in Miller Chapel in this year of grace 1964, the chances are good that his congregation would consider his sermon interesting, in a quaint sort of way, but quite irrelevant and perhaps even indecent.

And if some contemporary Stephen Dedalus were to sit for his "Portrait" in most parts of modern Protestant America rather than in the Catholic Ireland of James Joyce's day, it is unlikely that he would be exposed to such vivid and minutely detailed descriptions of hell as to overburden his young soul with an oppressive sense of guilt and terror.

We have progressed beyond such crudities. Dante's pilgrimage is not ours; the Inferno has been exploded as a myth. Science and the Church have joined forces to dampen the fires of hell, and modern, sophisticated, theological man has deliberately repudiated the realm of the damned just as he has vacated the realm of an eternally unmitigated bliss.

There is much to be grateful for in this movement away from the attempt to scare people into the Kingdom of Grace. But the question must seriously be raised whether the current wholesale abandonment of the myth of hell is necessarily and totally progressive. It is my strong suspicion that a healthy baby has been thrown out with this particular bath-water.

It is not my purpose here to argue for or against de-mythologisation, or trans-mythologisation, or even re-mythologisation as these terms are currently understood and misunderstood. My aim is considerably more modest: to suggest, in a frankly speculative way, that there was a reality enshrined in the old myth which

has not ceased to be real and which can be recaptured if we are willing to accept the proposition that there are two faces of hell.

The issue is posed for us in a short poem written approximately forty years ago by the late Robert Frost:

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.*

*From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.*

*But if I had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate*

*To say that for destruction ice
Is also great*

And would suffice.

There are always some things in man's life which he is not prepared to look at face-to-face; some things which he can only approach but dare not get too close to. To know these things absolutely, to know them in their naked power as the truth about ourselves, would be too threatening, too crushing. We can tolerate the knowledge that these things exist, and profit from this knowledge, only if we can put some sort of distance between them and ourselves; if we can picture them as belonging to some other place and some other time, but a place and a time which could be ours if we don't give them some attention. And this, I suspect, is one of the prime reasons why the doctrine of hell, with all its morbid and extravagantly lurid mythology, held sway for so many centuries.

A doctrine of a hell which is characterised by fire goes naturally with a conception of man's basic dilemma which is dominantly concerned with his desires—with lust, and gluttony, and greed, and

covetousness, and pride, and sloth, and envy (and who among us today even recognises these as the "seven deadly sins?"). The Church has always, and rightly, proclaimed the possibility of deliverance from man's basic dilemma but in so doing it has always, and necessarily, run the risk that its offer of redemption would mean that man does not take his basic dilemma seriously, and that he will seek cheap refuge in the accommodating security of the confessional. The doctrine of the hell of fire served as a timely reminder to penitent and confessor alike that cheap grace does not alter the reality of man's basic situation.

Hell held no terrors for those who were prepared to take the reality of their own sinful desires, and the reality of God's forgiving love, with appropriate seriousness. But for those who sought to evade the reality of their own sin by taking premature comfort from the forgiveness mediated by the Church, the myth of hell served to bring them closer to the truth about themselves.

Modern, mid-twentieth-century man has learned to look upon these "desires of the flesh" in such a way that they no longer constitute his basic dilemma. He is probably neither better nor worse than his medieval counterpart in terms of his yielding to these desires, but they are stripped of their mystery for him; they have become an accepted part of the natural order of things and it is no longer so imperative to hide from them, or to disguise our knowledge of their existence so as to be able to tolerate the fact that they are realities in our lives. The progressive development of human consciousness and the intense interest, indeed pre-occupation, of contemporary man with his own psychology has had the effect of shifting the locus of his basic dilemma from desires to relationships. It is not accidental that the focus of theological attention has changed correspondingly.

Frost wrote in a period of transition. For his own part he was prepared to "hold with those who favour fire" but

he yet conceded that the destructive power of hate constitutes a present reality great enough to threaten fire with ice as the appropriate form for "the end of the world." What then does this mean? Simply that as man loses his fear of his own desires that fear will find expression in something else, something closely related to hate.

The mythology of hell in its traditional form serves only for those who fear desires; some new form must be found for those who cannot tolerate their own hatred lest they imagine that they can find cheap and easy refuge in the arms of a God of love. The need remains to proclaim deliverance to the captives—and to protect man from the dangers of cheap grace.

The hatred of which I speak is, of course, a hatred which finds expression in the widespread difficulty that modern man experiences in establishing meaningful relationships with other persons, even with those to whom he feels he ought to be close: wife, family, friends, colleagues, and—for the Seminarian particularly—fellow-students and teachers. But it is equally obvious that we do not hate these other people (at least not all of them, or not consistently, or not unambiguously). The primary hatred is directed against ourselves. And this is the truth we cannot readily tolerate if it is true of us.

Evasion of this truth causes the religiously inclined among us to seek for a form of religion which will protect us from having to face the reality of our own lives. This may be expressed in many ways. One of the most common is the desperate demand for "community" and for "fellowship." But fellowship and community prove sterile and fruitless when they are based on evasion. The lie cannot father the truth. For some, the escape route is via enslavement into either aimless fluidity without point or purpose or into an increasing rigidity of doctrine which is equally meaningless and empty. It is all too easy to deny the incarnation of God in the name of the

Incarnate Son of God; religious experience or religious form which enables us to evade the fundamental issues of our own humanity becomes blasphemy, however piously it may be expressed. And where is the myth to remind us that we are cheating in life; to put the brakes upon our experiments in cheap grace?

In all tentativeness, but also in all seriousness, I offer the following reconstruction of hell, a hell for our times: "Hell is not hot, it is cold. It is cold because there you are naked, remorselessly naked, and the whole place is fitted with mirrors so that wherever you run you see only your nakedness, and your neighbor's nakedness, and your own reflected in his.

There is no desire left in hell; there is nothing to desire in nakedness. Desire is the illusion that there is no nakedness. Strip our clothes from us and there is nothing left. What we call desire is a blindfold over emptiness.

And hell is empty; empty and barren, stripped of everything. Other people are there, to be sure, many people, but each is alone, each one is desperately alone and cut off from his neighbors except to see their reflections in those everlasting mirrors.

And what of the torments of hell? They are real enough, God knows, and they consist in the anguished struggle to pull clothes on over the nakedness and to hide the emptiness. Some of the citizenry of hell choose clothes in the height of fashion; some are content with the dull but serviceable; some would wear the robes of their professions; and some have only tattered rags. But each and every one of these citizens is clawing at his garment, trying desperately to make

them fit over the abyss of nothingness that makes up his ghostly life.

And the dance of death, what of the dance of death? The phantoms of hell go through the daily motions of fellowship, they exchange the common courtesies and perfunctory greetings with the neighbors they can never reach and never know—and all this in the blind attempt to sustain the illusion that they are alive and to shut off from themselves the fact that they are alone. And beneath this pitiable mime there lies the Fear: the fear of knowing that they have nothing, that they know nothing, that they hope nothing, that they are nothing."

Such is life to many people in our time, a facade of things and conventions drawn around vacancy. Many people in our time are desperately alone in their busy schedules, their crowded social lives, their hectic homes, and their frantic religious activity.

And it is precisely hatred which gives to this aloneness the quality of cold desperation. The first and greatest commandment, said Jesus, is that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. And there is a second commandment which is of the same order: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But for us in our day, the hell of it is that we find it desperately difficult to love ourselves, and in consequence we have no basis from which we can love our neighbor. And in our inability to love our neighbor we deny the reality of the love we profess for our God. This self-love is, of course, a very different matter from the self-inflation that the theologian condemns as pride and the psychologist recognises as a symptom of inner empti-

ness and self-doubt.

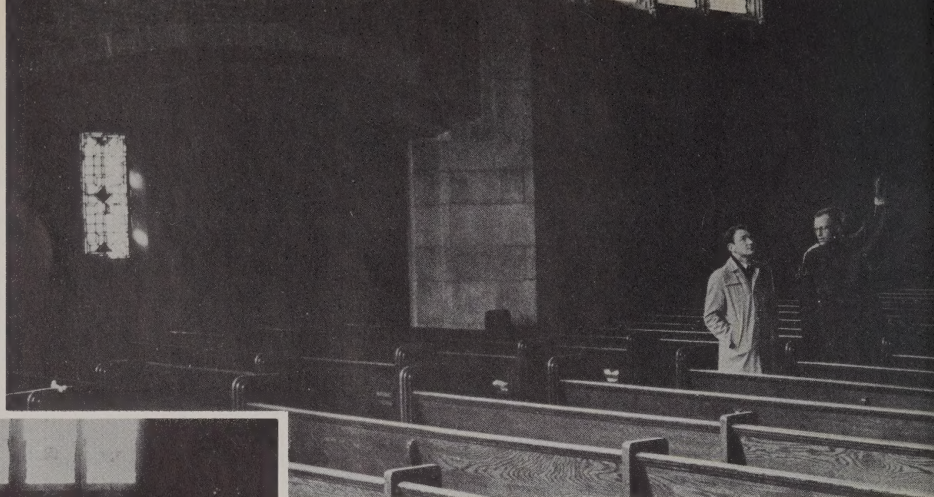
Love of God, love of neighbor, love of self—all three are so intimately inter-related that a disturbance, an inhibition, a blocking, in any one of these three directions of love inevitably disturbs and inhibits and blocks the other two. Similarly, freedom at any one point may be the key to unlocking the reality of each of the other two. But let us be realistic: the lock is rusty and a great and frequently painful effort is required to turn the key.

Hate feeds on fear which feeds on emptiness. And emptiness in its turn feeds on hate. This is the vicious cycle in which we are caught and in which our desperate attempts to love and be loved echo hollowly. The cycle can be broken but let the Church beware of assuming that merely talking about the love of God automatically guarantees its presence and its revitalising power in

a specific human situation. And let the Church beware of assuming that it can manufacture love from its desire to love. And let us recognise that the ability to love flows from the awareness of our being loved—but the offer of love cannot be lightly accepted. The power of love is one which threatens to destroy every security that we have, everything that we have based over a life-time of experience upon the deep but barely recognised conviction that we are unlovely and unlovable.

Some of us dare not accept that love and it is for these that I make this plea for a new face to hell. Not everyone can tolerate the suffering involved in crucifixion but everyone must in some way face the reality of their own being if they are to know the reality of God's redemption.

Graeme M. Griffin



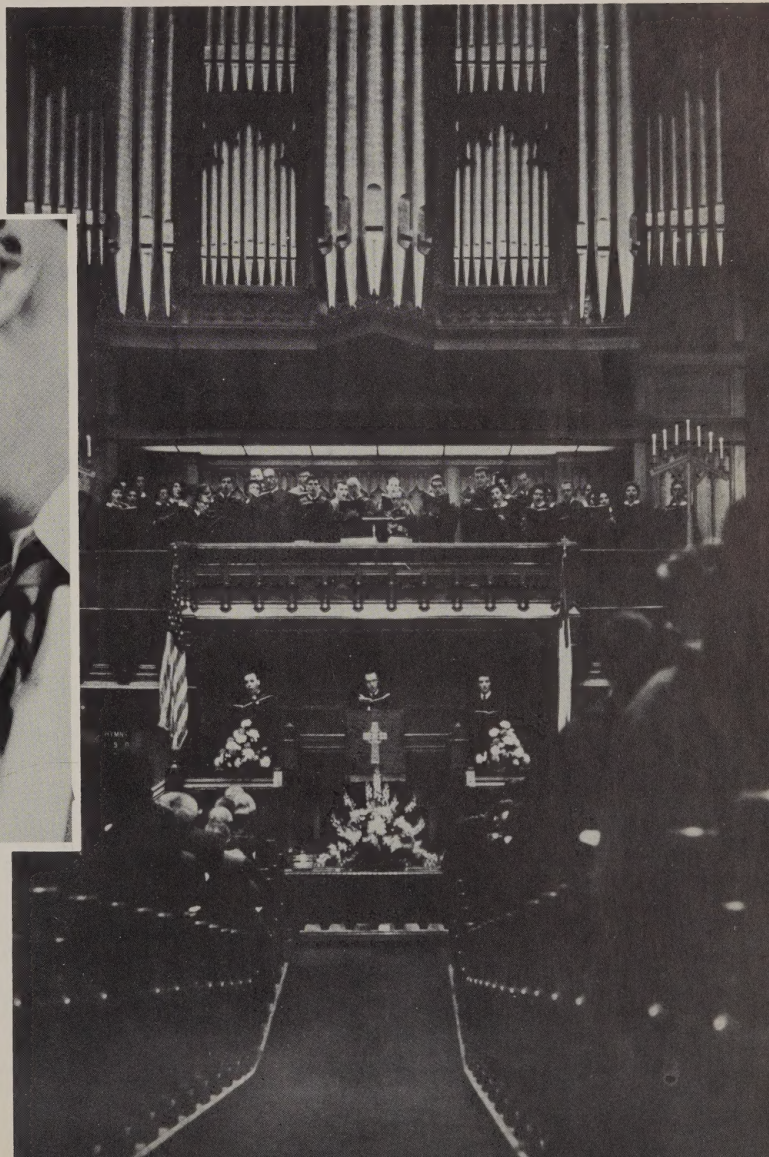
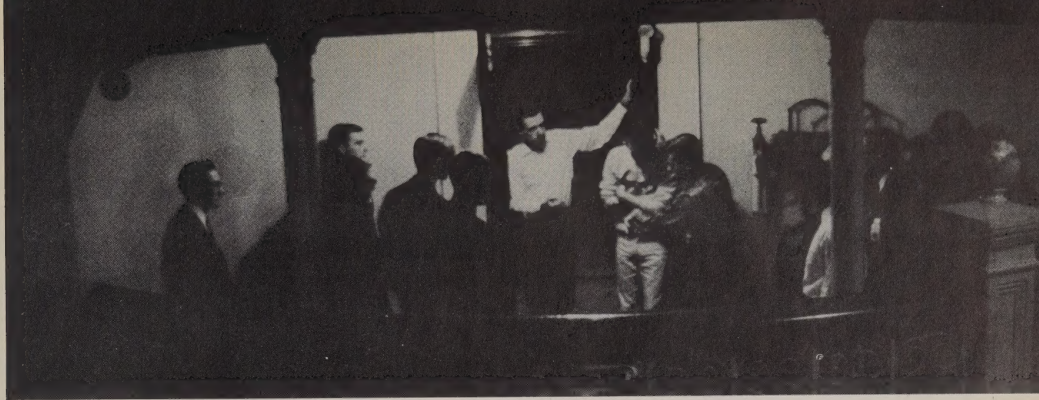
ecclesia

do you hear it?
the wind
as it reaches
the barbed wire?
(the holy ghost
whispering at the wall)
tumble, jericho,
tumble!
o where is the promised peace of chr:

just a generation away.
just a revolution away.
just a prayer away. hail mary
in the name of the father make
this black man white and keep us
safe all night and help us overcome
the wall of partition
and non-recognition. amen.

(it may help you to kneel
at the sign of the cross).

Nancy Howar



photography:
Richard L. Husfloen

MASKED IDOLATRY

The problem of racial discrimination is essentially man's age-old problem of idolatry. Man is a creature which must have some sort of god—something that is the center and the norm of his values. Racial discrimination grows out of man's attempt to worship the finite values of his own culture. If a man is able to judge the acceptability or unacceptability of other men according to their similarity to or divergence from the characteristics and values of his racial group, then his racial group is his god. It is the characteristics and values of his racial group that have become the center of his love and devotion and this is idolatry—pure and simple.

Such discrimination can be called idolatry because it is man's attempt to find security, worth and self-justification in a system of values which is foreign to what God has revealed in Jesus Christ. It is man's attempt to overcome his own insecurity by affirming his superiority over the members of another racial group. By depreciating other men he boosts his own ego and basks in the light of self glorification. He is willing to deny that Christ has claimed the whole human race for himself, regardless of race and color, and that God has given every man a new and inalienable worth through the new creation in Christ so that he may find his security in political power, status, and economic security. He is willing to deny the work of Christ so that he may worship the god of political power (denial of voting rights), the god of status (white lunch counters and restricted neighborhoods), and the god of economics (property values).

The main question which must be faced by the segment of American society which calls itself Christian is: What is the center and the norm of our values? Is it what God has revealed in Jesus Christ or is it the values of our modern culture? Do we really care more for the values of status, economic security, and political power than for the value of all men's essential worth? The answer to this question will determine what a man really worships. The tragedy which we are witnessing in the church today is that we can so easily give lip service to Christ

and in practice worship the gods of our culture. But from the biblical perspective the god a man really worships is not the god to whom he pays lip service **but the god upon whom a man bases his everyday attitudes and actions.**

If the norm of a man's values are the values and characteristics of his culture, then he is worshipping that culture and has abandoned his God. If he is able to judge the worth of men in terms of his race, then his racial group is his god. Such a man has replaced the Christian value norm with a race or group-centered norm.

Racial discrimination is from the Christian perspective a double sin. Not only does it destroy the soul of the discriminator by its implied denial of dependence upon God as the source of a man's value scheme but also because it tends to destroy the lives of other men who were also created in the image of God. Man does not exist in and of himself. He is not to be an autonomous creature with an autonomous, man-made set of values. Rather, he is a finite creature who is dependent upon God, his Creator and Redeemer. His security and worth is not to be found in the excellence of his culture nor in his attempts to maintain what he regards as the "purity" of his culture. Rather, God is to be the center of his love and the standard of his values, and it is in God that man finds his security. **Secondly**, man has no right to depreciate the worth of other men for the sake of boosting his own ego and cov-

ering up his own insecurity. As Christians we have been called to be agents of reconciliation—not agents of destruction. Nothing is more patently contrary to the mind of Christ than attitudes and actions which lead to the destruction of other men's lives.

As Christians we are set free from judging another man's value and worth on the scale of degree of pigmentation. To do so is as foolish and evil as to judge another's worth on the basis of the size of his feet, the shape of his nose, or the amount of his hair. To the Christian, a man's race must be as irrelevant in our judgment of his value as the color of his eyes.

But the objection may be made that it is not the color of skin that is at issue but a whole complex of cultural values which are considered to be inferior to our own. Here again idolatry raises its head. If it be said that we must ostracize a whole race because we judge them to be "morally inferior," this judgment carries with it the assumption that we are acceptable in this category. By looking down our noses at another man and discriminating against him, we are assuming that we are less guilty than he is. But under the judgment of God **all men** are guilty and unacceptable. All men have and are subject to sin—including ourselves. It is true that our sinfulness may show itself in a different form than another man's sin, perhaps in a more subtle and sophisticated form, but in the eyes of God sin in any form leads to the same state of estrangement. We only fool ourselves if we say that our race is more pure than another race. We must come to the point of saying that we stand **with** other men in their sin and not stand over them as their judges.

It is the calling of the Church to tear down the barriers which divide a man from his God and from his brother. Race hatred is one of those barriers which must fall. Men must become reconciled both to one another and to God. This is the task, the mission and the vocation

of the Church. But if it is to be an effective agent of reconciliation, it too must be reconciled both to its God and to all men. It must learn to accept God's standard of values as the norm of its attitudes and actions and refrain from the easy road of adopting the values of its culture. It must refuse to fracture the body of Christ along racial lines. If the Church ever hopes to be a renewing agent in society and in the lives of its people, it too must be renewed. It too must repent.

The present crisis in race relations will provide the Church and her members a real opportunity to find out what god it is that we worship. This will be a time of severe testing. There can be little doubt that the everyday values of American culture are 'segregationist' because of our devotion to the gods of our culture. For the first time in many years the Church may be called upon to suffer for its gospel. Such a situation was familiar to the early Christians for they knew what it was like to live in a culture whose values were distinctly different from their own. In the past the American Church has seldom been called upon to distinguish between the values of 'Americanism' and the values revealed in Jesus Christ. As a nation we may profess a kind of 'Americanism' which sees men of all races as equal, but it is the everyday actions and attitudes of Americans which contradict the gospel of Christ. It is the values that we actually practice, and not those we profess, that really matter.

If there is this contradiction between the everyday values of our society and the values of the gospel, then the church which takes a strong stand in favor of the gospel may be called upon to suffer for its stand. There is evidence that the Church may have to be willing to sacrifice some of its worldly stature (budgets, etc.) if it holds firm to the gospel. But the Church has only one road to follow because she is called to serve one Master and one gospel, and in doing so the idols of success and stature may have to fall.

Clayton Carlson

some men try to hide !

A vast amount of modern scholarship makes getting married today a frightening experience. Potential new-lyweds can easily collect a score of books explaining all of the joys and potential dangers of marriage. Being interested in the totality of human behavior, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and historians describe the institution in careful detail. Many make use of these scientific insights in order to develop a successful marriage, but there are always some men who try to hide. They either consciously avoid anything that might be threatening or else they weigh all possible problems and decide for bachelorhood.

Social scientists of the modern "secular world" have combined a passion for understanding with a sophisticated behavioral science methodology and have not considered any area of human behavior as out of bounds. Religion has not escaped this searching eye, not even the Christian religion. Historians have traced the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility of the Pope to Pius IX's struggle to maintain power over the papal states. Protestant missions have been exposed in their illicit relationship to imperialism and even opium trade in China. Protestant Christianity wrote the legend "Gott mit uns" on German bayonets, while in Italy the Roman Church was a major stock holder in Mussolini's government. Sociologists have continued the exposé into the present by showing the middle-class nature of protestantism and the social causes of denominational differences in polity, liturgy and theology. Studies have been made of the *status quo* orientation of Protestantism and its effect on keeping the blue collar and the black face in its place. Johnson and Ackerman have pointed to *The Church as Employer, Money Raiser, and Investor* and discovered that sextons and church secretaries are often the victims of substandard wages and that many business practices of the church are less than ethical by the church's own standards for others.¹ The relationship between occupation, income, education, and religion has been studied, and it has been shown that a number of "secular" variables have a higher correlation with church attendance than our theology would seem to prescribe (Ga. 3:28). Anthropologists have also joined in the study of 'Forms of Religious Life.' The disorganizing and destructive results of the introduction of primitive people to Christianity has been carefully described (e.g. Redfield in Yucatan).² Psychologists extend the

inquiry by analyzing 'varieties of religious experience' and every type of conversion. Social scientists have shown Christian churches to be social institutions relative to their particular cultures without always being particularly 'relevant.'

The response to the numerous insights into the church available from these 'secular' sources has been varied. A few have reluctantly but consistently made use of them in order to develop a successful marriage, but many have tried to hide. Some have consciously tried to avoid anything that might be threatening while others have been overwhelmed by the problems of the church as a relative social institution and have decided to abandon this church for some sort of bachelor life.

Emil Brunner speaks of the Holy Spirit as the "life-breath of the Church" and concludes that "for that reason the Christian society itself is a miracle. It is, therefore, in point of fact, unintelligible from a purely sociological standpoint."³ This is the cry of the newlywed for some privacy, but Brunner's emphasis on relationship also insists that the "Ecclesia" be a social entity, thereby becoming data for the sociologist.

In all this the meaning of the Ecclesia is what we recognize from the New Testament as its characteristic essence: communion with God through Jesus Christ, and rooted in this and springing from it, communion or brotherhood with man. The oneness of communion with Christ and communion with man is the characteristic mark of the Ecclesia. In this second characteristic is implied: the oneness of the religious community—religion being here understood in the usual, cultic sense of divine worship—with the individual church members' religious sacramental approach to everyday work-day realities.⁴

Brunner is the spouse who faces the numerous volumes on marriage and admits that his is a social phenomenon which is not out of bounds for the social

scientist, but at the same time he cautions the sociologist that those 50 volumes do not evacuate his marriage (i.e., being married is better than reading about it, even though you learn a lot from reading). Some students of theology have gone only half way with Brunner hiding behind the idea that the church is a miracle and miracles are not fitting data for the social scientist. The sociologist may agree that his tools are inadequate for examining the reality of God, but every social group is of interest to him even if it is guarded by the title "church."

Barth tries to frustrate the criticisms of sociology by simply saying that his topic is beyond sociological investigation and is itself in favor of the "abolition of religion." Religion as a social phenomenon can be studied, but revelation judges this religion as it does all of society. Barth must not, however, assume that the behavioral scientist will allow him to completely hide revelation from sociological analysis. Barth himself, the "true church," and all behavior relating to revelation easily become subjects of study for the secular man who craves understanding of human behavior. Yet, Barth does not completely hide Christianity from the sociologist, admitting that "The existence of the Church of God and the children of God means that true religion exists even in the world of human religion."⁵ The newlywed will probably feel rather uneasy on being confronted with all this understanding of even secret behavior, but this does not imply that he will "abolish" his marriage. He may appreciate it even more.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer had a unique opportunity to examine the social weakness of the church. Formal religion meant little in prison especially when there was such a close relationship between the German state church and the Nazi state. He combined a "suspicion and horror of religiosity"⁶ with empirical observations that those around him might well be considered "radically without religion."⁷ He however, made a lasting error in speaking of this situation as "man come of

curity. Secondly, man has no right to taken these specific empirical insights and have transformed them into both a universal generalization and an ideology. Bonhoeffer pleaded that "The Church must get out of her stagnation,"⁸ but later disciples have emphasized a modern dispersion of the church in a "world come of age." The sociologist would like to correct a number of misconceptions. First, today's "man" is just as much a product of his social environment as he ever was. He has shunned a medieval ideology, but he has not shunned all ideology. 'Americanism' is just as binding on its social products as was the 'Christianism' of the thirteenth century on its people. Today's social order is obviously different, but to dignify it with the word "mature" or "come of age" is just a modern ethnocentrism. Second, it is misleading to assume that this social order is understood just because it has been labeled (i.e., "world come of age," "post-Christian world," or even "secular society"). The tools of the social scientist must be employed in an examination of modern society. The theologian has no *a priori* insight which will help him to outguess either the demographer or the ethnographer. The complexity of today's world demands that the person interested in making the Gospel relevant to society, work hard at understanding secular society (at least be acquainted with some of the vast literature of the social sciences and some of the guiding theory and methodology). Third, when people are forced into a diaspora situation, they always tend to duplicate the institutions of Jerusalem in the new land. Religion is still with us and however much we would like to disown it, the world has identified us with it. The church cannot stop being a social institution because every time the dispersed listen to a lecture on the diaspora they are of interest to the sociologist of religion. A man just can't successfully hide his marriage for very long without someone finding out.

Bonhoeffer contributes a valuable in-

sight in showing the weakness of considering the church as an end in itself, but he goes further, making a plea for a reborn "Christian thinking, speaking and organization."⁹ It is impossible to absolutize the church when all the facts are known. Tillich openly faces this relativity of the church and of society. He says that "In the power of the Protestant principle, Protestantism must fight not only against other ideologies but also against its own."¹⁰ Tillich has come to grips with the social science insights into religion, but he seems to imply that an ideology free situation can, or at least, should be attained. This fight against all ideology is unrealistic, if not inhuman. The requirement that every movement of man be accompanied by decision is to make freedom an unbearable burden. The disrobing of ideologies does not indicate that we can live without them. Social and value patterns exist and become a part of men thus making it possible for them to live within a particular social context. The social scientist can point out ethnocentrism in our thinking, acting, and worshipping, but this discovery of relativism gives man no security. As Reinhold Niebuhr correctly points out,

In many ways the most basic distinction between secularism and a genuine Christian faith is at this precise point. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, no achievements of culture and civilization can finally give man security. On the contrary, most of the evils of life arise from the fact that man seeks frantically to establish absolute security by his power, wisdom, or virtue.¹¹

The predicament is obvious. The church has been shown to be a relative, secular institution in a relative, secular society, and it is also clear that this is not a temporary situation. The alternative responses are also clear. We can accept the insights and use them to adapt our relative churches to our relative cultures by the direction of our absolute God. On the other hand, we can hide. We can refuse to admit the social science insights into religion, or

we can accept them and claim we are also against religion in this "bad" sense, or we can imagine that there is some way to be a church without these problems. Any such hiding is detrimental.

Facing the facts includes the following steps:

1. Repentance based solidly on the confession that the Christian church has acted, is acting and will act as a relative (and sinful) social institution. This obviously implies an identification with the church in its errors as well as in its glories. Be honest.

2. Recognition that God is well aware that our churches are relative social institutions and that He does not consider it a mistake to have used "earthen vessels" (cf. II Cor. 4:7). Notice that the Biblical literature addressed to the churches allows

for no false sense of perfection. The words "but I have a few things against you . . ." are echoed many times in both the New and the Old Testaments, along with such statements as "now you are the body of Christ . . ."

3. Renewed effort to relate the Gospel to the secular society by means of our relative institutions. Flexibility is encouraged by the understanding that the institution is not absolute and the present institution is supported by the fact that any new social institution (or social dispersion) will be subject to the same problems.

4. Reinforced attempts to understand the nature of society with the help of the secular social scientists that have already given the church a better look at itself and its social context.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."

II Corinthians 4:7

Donald H. Liebert

¹F. Ernest Johnson and J. Emory Ackerman, *The Church as Employer, Money Raiser, and Investor*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

²Robert Redfield, *A Village that Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

³Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 12.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), I:2, p. 344.

⁶Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, (London: Fontana books, 1962), p. 44.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁰Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, (abridged edition), (The University of Chicago Press: Phoenix Books, 1948), p. 163.

¹¹Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Christian Faith and the Economic Life in Liberal Society", (Project No. 1, mimeographed), p. 18.

"Beachfront"

Lapping sea wipes out the prints of a slow ungaited march,
More an ambling over the wet white sand,
Now hand in hand, then arm in arm,
The figures stop, stoop, and then continue on,
Examining bits of glass, jagged shell,
Tracks of gulls, coal-tar smell.
Ahead, the whine of reel and plunk of sinker,
Beneath, damp sand squishes beneath bare toes,
All senses are aware, they see, they know,
From the west black nimbus, from the south cool air,
A new moon, an old sun over a deserted beach.
The figures laugh, they run, they jump,
They cry, they puzzle in a treasured home,
With the larger turning softly to the other,
Gripping with tensed tendons,
Catatonic moments holding each the other,
When eyes acquiesce the expected answer . . .
Love, eros, or is it agape? Whose responsibility?
Come down from the dunes, on down through debris,
Down finally to where the sand meets the sea,
Where to see is perceive and hear understand,
Alone and aware and attempting to know,
Of the crust of salt on a dungaree.
There notice the dampness, notice the eye,
Of a fresh-killed fish turned in on itself,
Weathering fishermen mending their nets,
Here on the damp sand at the very edge of the sea,
Whistle for help in bare empty tones.

Frank H. Poole

Touch me,
ragamuffin;
earthling . . .
covered with the dust of death,
and dying . . .
and I will kiss away your tears
and with compassion
raise you to the rose of life,
and with my body's breath
assail the foes of meaning
that prevent your prayers.

One small request
before I work
my magic charm: through all
the ecstasy of learning-life
that waits for you,
remember please
to love me not.

Nancy L. Howard

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